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For Immediate Release

Harford County Public Library Holds Ribbon-cutting Ceremony and Grand Opening For New Darlington Library

New Library includes many first-in-the-system features including 24/7 exterior locker pick up, tablet tower and exterior patio with fireplace for community gatherings

Street, Md., October 20, 2022 -- Harford County Public Library held a ribbon-cutting ceremony and grand opening for the new Darlington Library October 19.

Located in a repurposed, upcycled building at 3535 Conowingo Road in Street, the new library offers more than 4,000 square feet of space and is located on 1.9 acres at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 136, just five miles from the previous location in Darlington Village.

Attending the ceremony were Harford County Executive Barry Glassman, Library CEO Mary Hastler, Dr. William B. Allen, chair of the Harford County Public Library Board of Trustees, and other local dignitaries.

The new Darlington Library offers three first-in-the-system features -- 24/7 exterior locker pick up for books and materials; a tablet tower for customers to read magazines and explore apps; and an exterior patio with fireplace for community gatherings.

Other features include a whimsical fence/gate; hitching rail for customers' four-legged friends; "story walk" along the outdoor walking trail leading to the Harford County Agricultural Center; pre-school learning area; two small conference rooms off the foyer; several book drops; drive-through window service; public computers, printing and copier services; free Wi-Fi access throughout the property; and FocalPoint Biofiltration System, a customer-focused, environmentally committed system.

“The new Darlington Library will be a community gathering place,” said Mary Hastler, CEO of Harford County Public Library. “Repurposing a vacant building into a state-of-the-art public library supports our mission of creating a wonderful resource for the community.”

The property was purchased for \$850,000 in 2020 by Harford County Government and Harford County Public Library. Through the support of the Harford County Public Library Foundation, the property was secured and is located at the intersection of Conowingo Road (Route 1) and Route 136, a highly traveled route in the county with a strong historical heritage.

The building was originally constructed in 1996 as a Wawa, before the convenience store acquired a larger piece of property across the street and relocated. A few banks operated out of the building until it was purchased by the County and Library in 2020.

The community expressed a desire for the Library to retain the original building’s footprint, and the Library and County incorporated the community’s wishes in the planning.

The funding to renovate the interior and exterior of the building was \$2.6 million and includes all associated mechanical, electrical, plumbing and site work. In addition, a budget of \$500,000 was allocated for furnishings, shelving, new technology and other features. The Library recruited and hired additional staff in anticipation of a larger library and additional services.

Funding for the project came from Harford County Government, Harford County Public Library, Harford County Public Library Foundation, Friends of Harford County Public Library, Katherine and Bryan Kelly, and the Morris Mechanic Foundation.

Replacing the Darlington Library is part of Harford County Public Library’s 2018 Master Plan. The Darlington Library was previously located in a modular structure in Darlington Village. It was a small branch (just 1,473 square feet), woefully undersize and unable to adequately serve the needs of the community. Building a new library in the Village was not feasible because of several issues including limited property availability.

For more than 75 years, Harford County Public Library has provided its communities with access to ideas that inform, entertain and inspire. Last year the library interacted with its residents more than 12 million times – borrowing free materials, visiting branches and the website, using free WiFi, and attending classes and events. In 2021 Harford County Public Library was named a Star Library by *Library Journal*. For more information, visit HCPLonline.org.

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